

# Timpanogos tour is worth climb and wait

## OUT & ABOUT IN UTAH COUNTY

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Timpanogos Cave National Monument in American Fork Canyon doesn't necessarily need any additional business, but people should know about Timpanogos Cave.

For a three-hour time investment, visitors can see one of the most beautiful natural wonders of the world, and is it only 30 minutes away by car; plus a little more on foot.

But, if you want tickets to the cave tour, you should get there early in the morning or purchase them through the mail up to two weeks in advance, because sold-out days are not uncommon.

Timpanogos Cave National Monument is really three caves in one: Hansen Cave, discovered in 1887; Middle Cave, discovered in 1921; and Timpanogos Cave, discovered in 1914-15.

The area was made a national monument within a few years after the discovery of Timp Cave, said Mike Tranel, who has served as the chief park ranger since last October.

President Warren G. Harding signed a proclamation making the area a national monument on Oct. 14, 1922.

"The cave is wonderfully well-pre-



Great Heart of Timpanogos has always been a top attraction.

served," Tranel said. "Mainly because it wasn't used commercially as many other caves in the country were."

To reach the cave's entrance, visitors must climb a 1½-mile-long trail which rises 1,000 feet from the canyon floor.

The trail is complete with benches and a restroom near the top. Park visitors should take water with them, especially if they hike in the after-

noon.

When visitors reach the top of the trail, a drinking fountain near the cave's entrance awaits them, and Park Ranger Carl Wadsworth said the water comes from the cave.

"We test the water every day to make sure it is all right to drink," he said. "And it comes from a part of the cave that no one ever goes into."

Wadsworth, from Bountiful, will attest to the cave's beauty and

uniqueness as he "interprets" the cave for visitors.

Tranel explained that the rangers are not tour guides but interpreters. "This is more professional," he said. And it allows for more of a learning process instead of a tourist-tour guide relationship.

Wadsworth explained Timpanogos Cave is unique because it follows a fault line.

Most caves are on the valley floor and are formed by underground water or rivers, he said.

One unusual feature of the cave is the helictites, which grow straight out from the wall, seemingly against gravity, Tranel said.

"It is the best collection of helictites anywhere in the country," he said.

The Great Heart of Timpanogos, which is a stalactite shaped like a heart, has always been a great attraction, Wadsworth said.

According to Wadsworth, the cave opens in April and stays open "until we have to shovel snow off the trail."

Tours run every 20 minutes daily from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and tickets can be purchased at the visitor's center in American Fork Canyon, but there is a limit of 20 people per tour.

Because the tours tend to sell out, early ticket sales can be arranged by calling 756-5238 or by writing R.R. 3 Box 200, American Fork, UT 84003.

The average cave temperature is 43 degrees, and a light jacket or sweater is suggested.



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A ranger explains features of Timpanogos Cave to a tour group. Tours run every 20 minutes daily from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.